

CITY-COUNTY OF BUTTE-SILVER BOW

COMPREHENSIVE PARK, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Community Needs Assessment includes key findings regarding existing park and recreation facilities in the consolidated City of Butte-Silver Bow County. In addition, it identifies current and projected programming, park and recreation facility needs. Needs are detailed for the current population and for the planning horizon (2028) population.

This report details what the community needs in order to achieve the objectives it has envisioned. This report does not address how these needs will be met, which will depend on further analysis of the priorities of the community and the resources available during the planning period.

PARK LAND NEEDS

The need for park land in each category was analyzed based on a geographic model of park access, the standards for comparable communities, public involvement findings and the trends observed in park systems throughout the western states. This multi-faceted approach identifies specific quantitative needs for park land reflecting community preferences for the park system. Overall, the existing park system is heavily concentrated in Butte, north of the I-15/I-90 corridor. Newer residential areas have very little park access in their neighborhoods, and many of the City-County's parks are minimally developed. The park land analysis developed existing level of service and proposed standards, expressed in terms of acres of land per 1,000 persons in the County, for each park type (no standard was proposed for natural areas or undeveloped park land. These ratios are summarized below.

Table 1: Summary of Park Land Service Levels

| Park Type | Existing Level of Service | Proposed Level of Service Standard |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mini Parks | 0.11/1,000 persons | 0.08/1,000 persons |
| Neighborhood Parks | 0.49/1,000 persons | 1.54/1,000 persons |
| Community Parks | 4.44/1,000 persons | 5.76/1,000 persons |
| Special Use Areas | 2.95/1,000 persons | 2.95/1,000 persons |
| Total | 7.99/1,000 persons | 10.33/1,000 persons |
| Natural Areas | 120.42/1,000 persons | N/A |
| Undeveloped Park Land | 64.85/1,000 persons | N/A |

Based on the proposed standards, the acreage needed currently (2008) and at the end of the planning horizon (2028) can be determined. The net need is the total amount of park land that should be added to the existing park acreage by 2028 to meet the proposed level of service. Table 2 summarizes these figures by park type.

Table 2: Current and Future Park Land Needs (Acres)

| Park Type | Existing Park Land | Current Land Need 2008 | Future Land Need 2028 | Net Land Need 2028 |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | |
| Mini Parks | 3.64 | 2.77 | 2.97 | (0.68) |
| Neighborhood Parks | 17.12 | 53.29 | 57.10 | 40.00 |
| Community Parks | 153.48 | 199.33 | 213.57 | 60.09 |
| Special Use Areas | 102.01 | 102.01 | 109.38 | 7.37 |
| Total | 276.25 | 357.4 | 383.02 | 107.46 |
| | | | | |
| Natural Areas | 4,167.42 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Undeveloped Park | 2,244.25 | N/A | N/A | N/A |

The analysis identified a need for 108 acres of new park land with at least some land needed in each park type except for mini parks. Some of this park land is already in City-County ownership and simply needs to be developed as a park. Other undeveloped park land is dedicated land from the Superfund settlement or other mine lands that will likely become part of the park system (mostly in natural area use).

The park access analysis also indicates that several of the existing mini parks in Uptown Butte are duplicative in that they are closer to each other than necessary to achieve the walking distance set out in this analysis.

Future park development in Silver Bow County should also include communities outside of Butte. As the more remote communities grow in population, some basic park services should be provided closer to these homes. The need for community park land assumes two new rural community parks will be necessary during the planning period.

RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

In addition to open land, the facilities that support play, learning and exercise are a critical part of the overall park system. This analysis considers a wide range of factors and discusses the community's needs at several levels. Sport fields and trails are addressed with quantitative models including comparisons to similar community standards and supply and demand analysis. Other facilities, which are typically unique in the park system or distributed throughout it, are discussed more generally. Needs for these facilities are based on input from community members, observations by the planning team as well as the trends in providing recreation facilities across the western United States.

SPORT FIELDS AND TRAILS

Many of Butte-Silver Bow's parks are primarily made up of sport fields or other sports-related recreation facilities. These facilities are critical to youth and adult organized sports, but are also land-intensive and require considerable maintenance. Therefore it is important that the community provide the correct levels of service for these facilities. At the same time, in line with nationwide trends, Butte-Silver Bow residents are increasingly interested in trails and trail activities. For these two reasons, this needs assessment includes proposed level of service guidelines for these facilities.

After comparing the Butte-Silver Bow park system against similar communities, examining the supply and demand for facilities, analyzing the function and connections to parks, and considering the public input from a wide range of residents, a proposed level of service guideline was determined for a selection of recreation facilities. Table 3 summarizes the existing level of service and the proposed guidelines for these facilities.

Table 3: Summary of Selected Recreation Facilities Service Levels

| Facility Type | Existing Level of Service | Proposed Level of Service Guideline |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Baseball/Softball Fields | 1 Field/1,193 persons | 1 Field/1,200 persons |
| Football Fields | 1 Field/3,461 persons | 1 Field/4,000 persons |
| Soccer Fields | 1 Field/2,662 persons | 1 Field/2,600 persons |
| Trails | 0.56 miles/1,000 persons | 2.01 miles/1,000 persons |

In regard to dedicated sports fields, the analysis showed that the community is well-served by the existing facilities and proposes a guideline based on this existing level of service. The exception to this is the proposed guideline for trail development, which is substantially higher than the existing level of service. Demand for trails and trail related activities are high and the area served by the City-County is

large; therefore, the standard was set to promote considerable growth in the trail system. The number of new facilities needed during this planning period (fields, or miles in the case of trails) can be calculated using the proposed standard for both the current and future needs. The results of these calculations are summarized in Table 4, below.

Table 4: Current and Future Recreation Facilities Needs (Selected Facilities)

| Park Type | # of Existing Facilities | Current Need 2008 | Future Need 2028 | Net Need 2028 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Baseball/Softball Fields | 29 | 29 | 31 | 2 |
| Football Fields | 10 | 9 | 9 | (1) |
| Soccer Fields | 13 | 13 | 14 | 1 |
| Trails | 19.5 miles | 64.7mi | 69.5 miles | 50 miles |

With the exception of trails, most of these facilities are currently at appropriate numbers. Most of the small changes in the future could even be addressed by upgrading fields to allow more play or changing the type of fields provided. In some cases the numbers of facilities do not tell the whole story—new fields may be needed in some sports to replace existing single fields in simpler to maintain arrangements of multiple, up-to-date fields.

OTHER FACILITY NEEDS

In addition to the sport fields and trails discussed above, there are numerous other sports and activities that require facilities in the park system. This analysis identifies and discusses community needs including the following:

- Updated or new playgrounds in underdeveloped parks;
- Supporting park amenities for almost all parks;
- Tennis court resurfacing or replacement;
- Upgrades to public golf facilities at Stodden Park;
- Maintaining and expanding indoor recreation opportunities in partnership with schools and other groups;
- Multiple dog park sites;
- Increasing wilderness and adventure sport facilities such as fishing and hang gliding; and
- Integration of historic and cultural resources and interpretation into parks.

AQUATIC FACILITY NEEDS

Aquatics are a special topic in this planning effort and are separated out from other recreation facilities to focus the discussion on some key elements.

In comparison to similar communities in Montana, Butte-Silver Bow is well-served for basic pool access by the existing providers. The community is fortunate to have a modern, indoor, YMCA aquatics facility that provides a variety of aquatics opportunities year-round. Other public and private providers also meet some of the residents' needs for aquatic fun and exercise.

The analysis of the input received indicates that there is additional need for specific types of aquatics activities and related experiences. Particularly, the community would like to have outdoor facilities that focus on play and provide social space to enjoy the relatively brief summer season. Community members would like to see some aquatics opportunities distributed across the community as well. There is also a stated desire for additional pool space designed to serve competitive swimmers.

The need for large community facilities is a difficult issue to address, as the ultimate decision typically comes down to what the community is willing to support through user fees and tax dollars. Options for meeting the identified aquatics needs will be presented as a next step in the planning process.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents an assessment of the overall community need for park land and recreation facilities. It examines the Butte-Silver Bow park system in terms of park access, park acreage and the number of park facilities serving City-County residents. In the context of this geographic and level of service analysis, standards are proposed for park land, and guidelines are proposed for specific types of recreation facilities in order to determine park and facility needs for the future. The standards and guidelines are based on needs identified for the park system through the year 2028.

The following terms are used in this section of the report:

- *Level of Service (LOS)*: LOS is a measure of the minimum amount of land or number of facilities needed to provide all of the recreation activities desired in a community. LOS is expressed as a ratio of acres or facilities per population.
- *Standards*: Minimum park land standards can be adopted to serve as a guide for the development of a future park system. The standards proposed in this report are expressed in terms of acres per 1,000 residents.
- *Guidelines*: The need for recreation facilities within parks is discussed as a proposed minimum level of service. These LOS guidelines are expressed in terms of one facility per number of people and net numbers of facilities needed. Adopting formal standards for recreation facilities is not proposed.
- *Local parks*: These terms are used collectively to describe classified mini parks, neighborhood parks and community parks that help meet local park needs.

Standards and guidelines are determined using the following population data.

The most *current population* is from 2000 Census data, which reports the total population within Silver Bow County to be 34,606. While the decennial census data is increasing out of date, the change in population in Butte-Silver Bow is slow enough that this number is reasonable to base calculations on.

The *future population* at the 20-year planning horizon has been projected based on the moderate growth scenario from the 2005 *Butte Silver Bow Transportation Plan Update*. This projection results in an estimated population of 37,078 for Silver Bow County in 2028.

PARK LAND NEEDS

The desire to provide local parks and trail access within walking or biking distance of all City-County residents is one factor used in determining how much park land is needed in Butte-Silver Bow. Another factor is the availability of open space and recreation facilities that provide the opportunities and experiences desired by Butte-Silver Bow residents. These basic premises provide the foundation for the methods used in this analysis.

The analysis of park land includes the following park types in Butte-Silver Bow, based on the park classification system:

- Mini parks;
- Neighborhood parks;
- Community parks;
- Special use areas;
- Natural areas/greenways; and
- Undeveloped areas.

METHODOLOGY

Several tools were used to determine current and future need for parks and recreation facilities in Butte-Silver Bow. These include determining public preferences for recreation opportunities; comparing the amount of park land in Butte-Silver Bow to other agencies; comparing existing levels of service and proposed park standards to comparable agencies; and analyzing the geographic distribution of park service areas and access points. These methods are explained below.

- *Review of Public Involvement Findings/Trends:* All results of the public involvement process were used in the development of this report, including Community Workshops, meetings of the Planning Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee, stakeholder interviews, focus groups and information from organized sports groups. These data support conclusions about the demand for and use of various types of parks and facilities.
- *Standards Analysis:* Comparisons to other park and recreation agencies in Montana provide a way to gauge where Butte-Silver Bow's existing level of service (LOS) and proposed standards for park land are above or below the norm. For this analysis, the park land standards for the cities of Helena and Kalispell are used. Historic National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) standards, established in 1983, are also referenced. While

these guidelines are often referenced, the current opinion of the NRPA and standard practice favors local standards and guidelines.

- *Access Analysis:* The geographical distribution of parks, and park access, was considered to determine the need for some types of parks and recreation facilities within the planning area. The access analysis focused on the parks and residential areas of Butte, as the only area within Silver Bow County that has sufficient density to support multiple park types and local park access. An analysis of existing park service areas revealed which areas within Butte are in need of more parks and resources.

Using the information developed in these analyses, proposed park land standards are developed and the current and future needs for park land of each type are presented.

The analysis of park land includes two major sections. First, park access is discussed for parks that provide basic recreation amenities. Following this discussion, each park type is analyzed according to the relevant tools listed above.

ACCESS ANALYSIS

In a good park system, parks should be situated so that facilities and open space are easily accessible to potential users. For this reason, park access is one of several key criteria in establishing an appropriate level of service for the provision of park land. In Butte-Silver Bow, the need for park access is based on the assumption that basic park services (a play area and an open unprogrammed green space) should be provided within walking distance of all Butte residents. In other communities in the County, access to parks will be considered as communities reach a population or density threshold, such as 750 residents or 300 households in one square mile.

Several important factors influence park access, relating to how people get to and use parks and recreation facilities. The access analysis in this report takes into account the following factors.

- *Transportation modes:* Residents of Butte-Silver Bow travel to and from parks in a variety of ways. The three primary modes of travel include walking, cycling and driving. For local parks (mini parks, neighborhood parks and community parks), the typical park user will live near the park, so the park is accessible via walking and cycling. For larger parks, a driving distance is set to reflect a short (less than five minute) drive.

- *Barriers:* For pedestrians and cyclists, a variety of physical and natural barriers in Butte-Silver Bow limit the ease of travel from one area to another. Major barriers include freeways and transportation routes, such as Interstate 15 and 90, and active railways. This analysis, by using street and trail connections across such barriers, will take into account limited crossings of these features.
- *Access points:* Each park in Butte-Silver Bow has a series of access points that allow entry to and exit from the parks and trails in the system. For parks, access points are located where trails and streets enter or intersect the site and no barriers exist (such as fencing or protected natural areas).
- *Travel distance:* Generally speaking, the distance people are willing to travel to get to a park or trail can be determined by studying user preferences and abilities. Typical pedestrians are willing to walk about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (approximately five minutes) to reach a park destination. In the public involvement activities in Butte-Silver Bow, many park users indicated a willingness to travel a greater distance, and longer time, to reach facilities in areas that are less densely developed or to get to a larger or more interesting park. For this reason most park types also have a one-mile service area illustrated. Mini parks are excluded from the one-mile service area due to their limited facilities and ability to draw visitors. Similarly, parks that do not provide the basic level of service are not assigned service areas (such as some special use sites and undeveloped parks).
- *Other providers:* This analysis is limited to those parks that are controlled by Butte-Silver Bow Parks Department. Other sites will be considered as alternatives for basic park access.

The table below summarizes the distances that users are willing to travel to parks.

| TRAVEL DISTANCE TO: | DISTANCE |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| PARKS | |
| Ideal walking distance | $\frac{1}{4}$ mile |
| Quick drive/reasonable bike ride | 1 mile |

INSERT MAP 1: ACCESS ANALYSIS

BACK OF MAP 1: ACCESS ANALYSIS

INSERT MAP 2: PARK ACCESS CONCEPT

BACK OF MAP 1: PARK ACCESS CONCEPT

SERVICE AREA ANALYSIS

The four factors noted on the previous pages (transportation modes, barriers, access points and travel distance) were assembled into a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) model to determine service area coverage for parks and trail facilities in Butte-Silver Bow. The model provides a map (presented on page 5) of City-County areas that are served by existing parks and facilities. A service area is determined for each park, based on the ¼ mile and 1 mile travel distance around access points to each of these sites. However, the borders of each service area are modified where interrupted by critical barriers.

These defined service areas are important aspects of the analysis of local park types (i.e., mini and neighborhood parks) and trails. Unserved areas within the City-County—mapped areas not adequately covered by park service areas—are analyzed below to identify opportunities to improving park service.

ACCESS TO DEVELOPED PARKS

The geographic analysis of the Butte-Silver Bow park system shows that the Uptown area is extensively covered by mini and neighborhood parks with many service areas significantly overlapping. In the central eastern area of Butte north of Interstate 15, a smaller number of relatively larger parks provide more evenly spaced coverage for local residents. In the area south of Interstate 15, park coverage is considerably less complete, with only a few isolated areas within ¼ mile of a developed park. With the exception of the small Fleecer Park, nearly all of Butte south of Stodden Park is unserved at either the ¼- or one-mile service range.

Several strategies can be explored to improve park access. These include, but are not limited to:

- Improving access using trails, pedestrian crossings and street and sidewalk improvements to overcome barriers or make key connections;
- Acquiring additional park sites, where land is or could be made available; and
- Developing park sites on publicly owned land (e.g., water division and fire station sites, etc.).
- Increasing the distance from residents that the City-County intends to provide park service. This would assume longer trips and result in more overlapping parks.

In Map 2, on page 7, the first three of these strategies are considered to develop a potential park system that improves access to unserved and underserved residential areas. This map identifies 12 areas that

are established and growing neighborhoods that do not currently have access to basic recreation resources. Seven of these are at least partially within the 1 mile service area of a park but not within the ¼ mile walking distance.

The park system concept illustrated in Map 2 takes into account general land-use patterns, the expertise of key City-County staff, and existing plans for parks. However, the map does not pinpoint exact locations for these sites. Some important notes about the system map follow.

- Each underserved area is coded with a letter and number (such as P3 or P4). The code is for identification and reference in this analysis only. The numbers on Map 2 run from north to south, beginning with P1 in the northern edge of Butte.
- These areas are where the need for additional park access has been identified and the actual location and type of any new parks will be determined later
- Recommendations (coming later in the planning process) about these areas will be influenced by land availability, acquisition costs, property ownership, community preferences and facility needs.

PARK LAND ANALYSIS BY PARK TYPE

MINI PARKS

Mini parks are typically located on small lots up to three acres in size. These parks are designed to serve residents within a ¼-mile walking radius, or in the immediately adjacent neighborhoods. Mini parks provide basic neighborhood recreation amenities, like playgrounds, benches, and landscaping. Typical mini parks are up to approximately ½ acre in size but are distinguished primarily by the minimal, basic facilities provided within them.

EXISTING SITES

The Parks Department currently provides a total of 3.64 acres of mini parks at eleven sites. Most sites contain a playground and/or basketball court, but some sites offer no facilities. Most of the mini parks are clustered in the Uptown area. In addition to the parks managed by Butte-Silver Bow, there are two other mini parks in the planning area: Walkerville Park and Williamsburg Park. These add an additional 0.6 acre of park land.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

Most comments relating to the smallest parks in Butte-Silver Bow's system focused on the lack of facilities within most of the sites. Long-term residents reflected on the past development of these small parks and expressed concern over the inability to maintain them, eventually leading to vacant or nearly vacant lots.

In communities across the western states, mini parks have been difficult to maintain, but at the same time are important to providing local park access. The number of mini parks increases travel time and repetition in maintenance tasks such as mowing and litter collection. However, in built-out areas the mini park is sometimes the only size of facility that can fit in close enough proximity to existing residential areas.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

The existing mini parks owned by Butte-Silver Bow provide a level of service of 0.11 acre/1,000 persons.

This level of service is lower than the adopted level of service standard for either Helena or Kalispell, at 0.14 and 0.13 acre per thousand respectively. No NRPA guideline was established for mini parks. In addition, the service provided by these parks should be

discounted due to the minimal development of the majority of the mini parks.

GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In several densely built neighborhoods of Butte, mini parks are the only reasonable way to provide immediate access to the most basic recreation facilities. However, the overlap of several mini park service areas in Uptown Butte indicates that there are at least four existing mini park sites that are not needed for access purposes. When identifying new park sites, it may not be possible to locate a larger neighborhood or community park in all of the identified areas.

PROPOSED PARK STANDARD

Based on the above analysis mini parks should make up a smaller proportion of the park system in the future. If the four mini parks that are completely overlapped by other parks were reclassified or removed, and acreage for one additional site were included approximately 2.7 acres of land would be needed at the planning horizon.

- Proposed LOS Standard: 0.08 acre/1,000

PARK NEEDS

Based on the park standard identified above, the following mini parks are needed:

- Current Need: 2.77 acres of mini park land are currently needed, this is 0.88 acres more than the current inventory.
- Future Need: Approximately 2.97 acres mini park land will be needed by the 2028 planning horizon. This is 0.68 acres less than the current inventory.
- Comments: Mini parks could be considered as an alternative to provide local park access in situations where a larger neighborhood site cannot be acquired.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are located within walking and bicycling distance of most users. These parks are generally three to five acres in size and serve residents within a ½-mile radius. Neighborhood parks provide access to basic recreation opportunities for nearby residents, enhance neighborhood identity, and preserve neighborhood open space. Neighborhood parks often include amenities such as playgrounds, basketball courts, turf areas, picnic tables, and benches.

EXISTING SITES

Currently, the City-County of Butte-Silver Bow has seven neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks vary from 0.8 to 4.8 acres and contain various amenities, including tennis courts, basketball courts, picnic areas, playgrounds, and trails. All together, the City-County's existing neighborhood parks total 17.2 acres and provide a level of service of 0.49 acre/1,000 persons. The largest neighborhood park is Chester Steele Park. Privately owned Koprivica Park also provides neighborhood park-level service, and many of the elementary schools provide a basic level of service that can approach that of a neighborhood park.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

Neighborhood parks were not an important emphasis of the public involvement findings although many of the facilities desired by the community could be located within them.

In many communities, neighborhood parks are the building block of the park system, including those facilities that residents most want located near to them. Neighborhood parks provide facilities that serve a wider range of age groups than mini parks do. This includes recreation needs from active pursuits, such as ice skating and basketball, to small gatherings and picnics. These parks are typically not designed to attract visitors from outside of the local area.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

The existing neighborhood parks in Butte-Silver Bow provide 0.49 acre per thousand population. When compared to the level of service standards for Kalispell, 2.74 acres per thousand, and Helena, 1.75 acres per thousand, Butte-Silver Bow is providing these facilities at a much lower level. The historic NRPA standard of 2.0 acres per thousand is also far above the current level of service.

GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In order to develop an accessible park system with convenient access for the residential neighborhoods of Butte, 12 additional parks would be required. It is likely that at least two of these would need to be community parks to fit additional facilities, discussed in the community parks and recreation facilities sections of this document. This analysis indicates that 10 areas should be served with neighborhood park-scale facilities.

PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD

Based on the analyses detailed above, Butte-Silver Bow should establish a level of service standard that is considerably higher than

the current situation. If 10 additional neighborhood parks were added to provide basic park services to all parts of the City-County, an additional 40 acres of park land would be needed (assuming four acres per site on average). Adding this 40 acres of park land to the existing 17 creates a planning horizon total of 57 acres of neighborhood park land. By dividing this acreage total by the projected population a level of service standard can be derived.

- Proposed LOS Standard: 1.54 acres/1,000 population

PARK NEEDS

Based on the park standard identified above, the following neighborhood parks are needed:

- Current Need: 36 additional acres of neighborhood park land are needed to meet this standard at the current population level. This equates to approximately 9 new park sites.
- Future Need: The slightly higher projected population will require 4 more acres (one more neighborhood park site) added to the park system.
- Comments: Existing park sites could also be expanded to provide more amenities to users but this would not address park access.

COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks are planned to provide opportunities for both structured, active and passive, informal recreation. Community parks generally include facilities that attract people from the entire community, such as pools, lighted fields, and recreation centers. These parks may also include significant natural areas and trails. As destinations, these sites require support facilities, such as parking and restrooms. In addition these sites serve local park access needs, fulfilling the role of the neighborhood park as well. The minimum size of community parks is generally 15 to 20 acres. Community parks with large facilities, such as golf courses, or extensive natural areas may be considerably larger.

EXISTING SITES

The City-County currently operates three community parks: Clark Park, Father Sheehan Park, and Stodden Park. These parks range in size from 15 to 109 acres. Each contains playground equipment, sports fields, and restrooms, as well as traditional neighborhood park

amenities, such as picnic areas. Altogether, the City-County's three existing community parks provide the community with 153.5 acres of community park land. Stodden Park is the City-County's largest developed park at nearly 117 acres.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

The community input heavily emphasized the importance of the community parks in Butte. Stodden Park, the premier community park in Silver Bow County, has been the focus of much of the community's attention. From renovated golf course facilities to aquatics opportunities, sports fields and courts, community parks are where major facilities serving the community are located. Community scale parks, along with special use areas, are also the preferred home for many new facilities desired by the public. When asked to design an ideal park, many workshop participants designed a large park with a wide variety of facilities serving different needs.

This scale of park is where many communities begin to provide specialized facilities, where they are not located on their own special use site. Grouping specialized facilities in community parks provides efficiency in providing support facilities and maintenance and promotes a central gathering place to foster community identity. The community park is the preferred park type for county agencies providing local park service in smaller outlying communities. These parks may be smaller, or larger, than a typical urban community park and include a range of recreation opportunities in recognition of the fact that they may be the only developed park for many miles.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

The City-County currently provides 4.44 acres of community park land/1,000 persons. This is the largest portion of the developed park system. In this category, Butte-Silver Bow provides a level of service that falls between the comparable communities of Helena and Kalispell (with adopted standards of 1.39 and 5.23 respectively). The historic NRPA standard for community parks, 8.00 acres/1,000 population is considerably higher than all of these communities. This is in part due to the number and size of special use sites, which were not considered in the NRPA standard, in all three communities.

GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Examining the location of existing community parks shows a concentration of all three facilities in the central portion of Butte, with no existing community parks in the more remote areas of the county. As discussed in the geographic analysis of neighborhood parks, it is likely that two additional community parks will be needed in Butte, along with neighborhood and mini parks to complete park access throughout the urban area. Future community parks should be

located such that residents living in the north and south areas of the city can visit a community park in their area. In addition, several smaller communities, such as Divide and Melrose, will need local park service as their populations grow.

PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD

Two additional park sites are needed to complete the park access model that includes the mix of existing parks and new sites. Two of the identified areas should be served by larger community parks to create the space needed to house additional community facilities (addressed in a later section of this document) that are too large for other park types or would benefit from grouping with other facilities. In addition, the City-County should plan on adding two smaller community parks to serve growing communities outside of Butte. Adding two community parks of 20 acres each and two more of 10 acres each to the existing 153.5 acres of community park results in a total of 213.5 acres of community park land in 2028. Dividing this by the population projected for that year results in a proposed level of service standard.

- Proposed LOS Standard: 5.76 acres/1,000

PARK NEEDS

Based on the park standards identified above, the following acreage is needed for community parks:

- Current Need: Based on this standard and the current population, Butte-Silver Bow currently needs 46 additional acres of community park land.
- Future Need: At the planning horizon of 2028, a total of 60 acres of additional community park land will be needed to meet this standard.
- Comments: Setting the level of service standard for community parks at a level that is higher than the comparable communities is justified based on the larger geographic area the joint City-County government is responsible for serving.

SPECIAL USE AREAS

Special use areas are freestanding specialized use facilities such as community centers, aquatic centers, sports complexes, boat ramps, historic areas, or skate parks. Since special use areas vary widely in function, there are no minimum sizes, but special use areas must be large enough to accommodate the intended use. Support facilities such as parking and restrooms are often included.

EXISTING SITES

Butte-Silver Bow currently has eleven special use areas. Four of these parks are skating rinks, and seven are primarily ball parks. Copper Mountain Youth Park, located just west of Butte's city limits, is the largest special use park with 61 acres and multiple sports fields. All together, there are 89 acres of special use areas in the study area. There are additional sites in the planning area that serve similar functions, particularly sports facilities located on school property.

Many of Butte-Silver Bow's existing special use sites are facilities built on remediated land, land that has been cleaned up, capped or otherwise treated after mining impacts. These sites are widely-spaced facilities that are not ideally located in the community based on use patterns.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

Much like mini parks, the trend in locating special use areas is to create a smaller number of larger sites that group facilities in ways in which they benefit each other. Public input supported this idea when residents discussed where important new facilities should be located. Copper Mountain Youth Park is a good example of the combination of a number of different sports facilities onto one site, all of which share supporting facilities (such as restrooms, concessions and parking).

Special purpose sites with only one season, or only one reason for anyone to visit, are often left unused for large portions of the year, making them targets for vandalism and other undesirable activities. In the case of outdoor skating rinks, while the widely distributed facilities are isolated the existing facilities should be retained or replaced as part of new neighborhood or community parks.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

The existing level of service for special use areas owned by Butte-Silver Bow is 2.95 acres/1,000 persons. This level of service is considerably lower than either comparable community's adopted standard. Both Helena and Kalispell are decreasing the proportion of special use sites in their planned park systems in favor of more fully-featured neighborhood and community parks.

PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD

Special use sites are alternatives to community parks for locating large new facilities in the Butte-Silver Bow park system. However, with new community park acreage, the need for additional special use sites is likely to be small. Maintaining the existing level of service would

allow for one small- to medium-sized site for a future (as yet undetermined) special use park.

- Proposed LOS Standard: 2.95 acres/1,000

PARK NEEDS

Based on the park standard identified above, the following acres are needed for special use areas:

- Current Need: Maintaining the current level of service standard requires no additional park acreage in this category to meet current needs.
- Future Need: To keep up with population growth and maintain the standard, seven additional acres of special use land will be needed by 2028.
- Comments: If developments such as the amphitheater at The Original Mine site do not become part of a community park, additional special use land may be required in the special use category.

NATURAL AREAS/GREENWAYS

Natural areas and greenways are permanent, undeveloped green spaces which are managed for both their natural value and their recreational use. Natural areas and greenways can be of any size, and may include wetlands, wildlife habitats, or stream corridors. Natural areas provide opportunities for nature-based recreation, such as bird-watching and environmental education. These parks may preserve or protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as unique or endangered plant species. Other types of natural areas provide for access and enjoyment of forest lands and other natural features. Greenways are often linear in nature, following natural or man-made corridors such as creeks and abandoned railways.

EXISTING SITES

At the present time, the City-County of Butte-Silver Bow owns Big Butte, Blacktail Creek, and Basin Creek Reservoir Park. Thompson Park, a 3,800 acre natural area, is co-owned and managed with the U.S. Forest Service. Existing natural areas mostly lie outside the Butte urban limits but still in the City's general vicinity. In addition to these designated park lands, additional properties in public and private ownership provide similar functions.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

According to comments from the public, the ability to walk out of Butte and into natural areas is an important part of why many residents live in this area. Publicly-owned natural areas, including

Butte-Silver Bow land, the national forests and other public lands, are key to the many activities enjoyed by residents.

In Butte-Silver Bow, and across the United States, natural areas are coming to be seen as part of the “Green Infrastructure” of a community. Park land uses natural processes to help preserve and restore air quality and water purity, and protect important plant and wildlife diversity.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

Butte-Silver Bow is a fairly unique case as a joint city-county government. The larger geographic reach of this agency and its responsibility for both urban and rural areas are particularly relevant when considering natural areas. Without considering Thompson Park, the City-County currently provides 10.44 acres of natural area park land/1,000 persons. With the shared acreage of Thompson Park included this level of service jumps to 120.42 acres/1,000. This high level of service, primarily due to the unique partnership with the Forest Service at Thompson Park, far outstrips the level of service standards adopted by Helena (37 acres/1,000) or Kalispell (10.2 acres/1,000). However, if the lands outside of the urban area of Butte (Thompson Park and Basin Creek) are removed from this inventory, both Kalispell and Helena’s standards would exceed the resulting Butte-Silver Bow level of service of just over 9 acres/1,000.

PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD

Natural areas’ level of service can be based on a number of factors, but is ultimately an opportunity-based decision. These opportunities present themselves as important natural features or habitats that need protection, remediated lands that need special maintenance or tell a story of past industrial practices, hillsides that provide signature views of an area, or simply the need to interact with nature. Silver Bow County has an abundance of natural areas. Some of this land falls under the protection of public agencies at several levels, but the rest is simply not developed. In addition, the City-County is in the process of determining the future of extensive lands transferred to public ownership as a result of environmental settlements under the Superfund program and mine sites transferred to the City-County. While some of this land will have uses that fall into other park categories, most of the superfund land will not be suitable for development and will likely become part of the natural space maintained by the Parks Department. If most of this “dedicated” land were added to the natural area category, the level of service for the City-County would jump to 172 acres/1,000 persons. However, establishing a standard that takes assumes this land as open space

would limit the City-County's flexibility in making the most appropriate use of the property.

PARK NEEDS

Based on the park standard identified above, the following acres are needed for natural areas/greenways:

- **Current Needs:** While no standard is proposed, much of the superfund and mine lands will become part of the park system. The most important need is to increase the funding and staff to properly maintain this property.
- **Future Needs:** Beyond the superfund and mine sites, the City-County should be looking for opportunities to add natural areas and greenway lands to the park system.

UNDEVELOPED PARKS

Undeveloped parks are public lands with no facilities or improvements. These sites are intended to be developed into parks in one of the above categories in the future.

EXISTING SITES

A wide variety of land has been included in the undeveloped park category. Most of the sites are lands that were dedicated to the City-County for park use but have yet to be developed. Some of these sites are suitable for park uses but many are leftover, undevelopable property, or in poor locations for a developed park. In addition, some parks in the system have reverted to a nearly undeveloped state, as playgrounds and other amenities have been removed and not replaced. For the purposes of this analysis, these parks will be left in the category in which they were originally developed and will be noted as sub-standard. An important subset of the undeveloped park category is the mine/Superfund land, which includes a large amount of land all around Uptown Butte. The total acreage of the "dedicated" mine/Superfund lands that are likely to become part of the park system is nearly 2,200 acres. An additional 48 acres of smaller, more isolated sites are scattered throughout the community.

PROPOSED PARK STANDARD

No standard is proposed for this category of land due to the fact that a particular site should only transition through this stage rather than stay undeveloped for any extended period of time.

PARK NEEDS

Because no standard is proposed, no additional undeveloped land is needed. However some of the existing undeveloped land will need to be developed into parks to meet access and facility needs. Other parcels of land may be identified as no longer needed.

Recommendations will be based on community priorities that will follow this analysis in the planning process.

RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

This community is very familiar with the fact that park land alone does not make for a complete park system. Recreation facilities are the many different types of elements added to park sites to create places to play, relax, enjoy nature or participate in community events. In this section, specific needs for various outdoor recreation facilities are discussed. The facility categories include:

- Baseball/softball fields;
- Football fields;
- Soccer fields;
- Tennis courts;
- Indoor facilities;
- Trails and pathways; and
- Playgrounds.

In addition, this analysis will acknowledge some of the many other facilities that can be a part of a park system.

METHODOLOGY

A variety of tools were used to determine current and future need for recreation facilities in Butte-Silver Bow. As in the park land analysis, the methodology determined public preferences for recreation opportunities; compared existing levels of service and facility guidelines to those of similar agencies; considered design guidelines for specific park types; examined the demand for sports fields; and analyzed the geographic distribution and routing of facilities (e.g., trails). These methods are described below.

- *Review of Public Involvement Findings/Trends:* All results of the Master Plan public involvement process were used in the development of this report, including the Sports Questionnaire, Community Workshop, meetings of the Planning Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee, stakeholder interviews, focus groups and information from organized sports groups. These data

support conclusions about the demand for and use of various types of parks and facilities.

- *Comparison to Other Agencies:* Comparisons to other agencies to help gauge where Butte-Silver Bow's existing level of service (LOS) and proposed guidelines for facilities are above or below the norm. For this analysis, the facility standards and guidelines of for the cities of Helena and Kalispell, Montana, were used for comparison. These comparisons are kept primarily to facilities located in Butte to ensure comparability. NRPA standards are also provided for reference.
- *Functional Analysis:* In future park development, a set of design guidelines will guide which facilities are appropriate for sites upon development. These guidelines ensure that parks have the necessary facilities to function appropriately within the park system. For example, design guidelines for neighborhood parks may specify that each park of this type will include a playground, one tennis or basketball court, and at least 75'x75' of open lawn. In these cases, these design guidelines can be factored in to the calculation of facility needs for playgrounds, tennis and basketball facilities in all proposed neighborhood parks. The functional analysis will consider typical design guidelines to assist in determining the number of a facility that should exist in the ideal park system.
- *Geographic Analysis:* The geographical distribution of and access routes to facilities were considered to determine the need for additional recreation facilities within the planning area.
- *Connection Analysis:* Connection analysis assesses linkages between parks and other community destinations throughout the City-County to help determine the need for additional trail segments.
- *Sports Field Demand Analysis:* A supply and demand analysis was undertaken to determine the need for sport fields. The demand for sport field facilities is determined using data from local sports teams, including the number of practices and games these teams have per week, along with the season(s) the sport is played. The supply of sport fields is determined using data from the parks inventory, including City-County-owned and other fields, and scheduling information from City-County staff. The supply of and demand for fields are compared to determine the current level of need for each type of facility. The analysis also indicates if there is an excess of fields or an under-met demand.

The current level of need informs an updated Level of Service (LOS) guideline for each facility, which is expressed in terms of one facility per number of residents served (such

as one [1] baseball field per 1,200 residents). The supply calculation for sport fields is based on current use of fields operated by the City-County of Butte-Silver Bow, the School District and others. This analysis assumes that each field is scheduled for two-hour blocks of time. This translates into one available practice or game time slot per weekday evening and, typically, three time slots on each Saturday and Sunday. In a few cases, additional time slots are created by extending play into the evening due to longer daylight hours or using field lighting. For this analysis, based on the current fields, field lighting adds one additional time slot per weekday and two per weekend day. The basic number of reservable time slots per week is equal to 11 slots for unlit fields and 16 for lighted fields. This has been adjusted by sport/season in some cases based on the actual use of fields in Butte-Silver Bow.

- *Consideration of Facilities Provided by Others:* In some cases, the City-County relies on the use of other providers' facilities to meet community recreation needs. Where numerical guidelines are established, the proposed LOS takes into account the existing level of service for facilities provided by the City-County and others. For this reason, these other providers are important partners in meeting recreation facility needs across the City-County.
- *Determination of a Guideline:* A proposed guideline is calculated based on the existing LOS for all providers. In some cases, the City-County will not be the major provider of these additional facilities. While some facility needs will be met by the City-County alone, many needs will be met by other providers. Additional facilities may be developed through partnerships, collaborations, and joint ventures.

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL FIELDS

Baseball/softball fields must have a backstop and dugouts, and may have a grass infield. Grass infields, while desirable for youth baseball and necessary for hard ball at higher levels, make softball play on the same fields impossible. Outfield and baseline dimensions vary according to intended age group and league. An outfield fence, although desirable, is not required. Fields must be level without holes.

EXISTING FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow provides a total of 25 baseball/softball fields for community use. These fields are concentrated in community parks

and special use areas. As mentioned above, many of the City-County's special use areas are made up of a single ball field built on remediated land. In addition to these, four additional baseball/softball fields are located on other school and park property. Most of the school district facilities do not include baseball/softball fields. The total of 29 baseball/softball fields translates to an existing level of service of one field per 1,292 population.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

The primary comments about baseball and softball fields were related to the quality of conditions at some of the fields. Older fields need to be brought up to the newer safety standards. A representative of the Mile High Little League noted inadequate parking at Father Sheehan Park and a need for additional fields at the lowest levels of play (T-ball and minor division).

Many communities are finding major benefits in clustering baseball and softball fields into sports complexes, much as Butte-Silver Bow has done with Stodden Park, Copper Mountain Youth Park and Father Sheehan Park. These complexes can share high-cost structures such as concessions, restrooms and storage and make maintenance less travel-intensive.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

In Helena (using the population of Lewis and Clark County, recognizing that their facilities serve this larger area) the standards for baseball and softball fields are separated and each has its own adopted standard. The two standards combined for comparison equal one baseball/softball field per 1,650 population. A similar situation exists in Kalispell's adopted standards; the combined ratio for baseball and softball would equal approximately one field per 530 population. Butte-Silver Bow's current level of service for baseball/softball fields, 1/1,193, falls between these comparable communities.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

Two types of fields were analyzed for supply and demand. T-ball fields were separated from the rest of the baseball/softball fields due to their smaller size and lower flexibility of use. For this level of analysis, all other fields (the majority of which have dirt infields) are assumed to be usable for either baseball or softball.

The existing supply of T-ball fields can provide a total of 33 playable practice or game time slots per week, based on 11 time slots per field per week. The current use of these fields by the two Little League

organizations generates a demand for 78 time slots. This indicates a shortage of approximately four T-ball fields.

The 26 baseball/softball fields in Butte-Silver Bow's inventory create a total supply of 322 practice or game time slots per week. This takes into account nine additional slots per field with lights (three fields at Stodden Park and the stadium field at Montana Tech are fully lit). Current play by the two baseball organizations generates a total demand for 271 time slots per week. This represents a surplus of 51 time slots or approximately four baseball/softball fields.

PROPOSED FACILITY GUIDELINES

In total, the number of additional T-ball fields and the number of surplus baseball/softball fields are equal. This suggests that overall current baseball needs could be met with existing facilities (because youth baseball or softball fields can be converted). The existing level of service appears to be meeting the community needs; therefore, the proposed guideline should be roughly equal to the existing level of service.

- Proposed LOS Guideline: 1 field/1,200 population.

FACILITY NEEDS

Using the facility guidelines noted above, the following needs for baseball fields have been calculated.

- *Current Need:* No additional baseball/softball fields are needed to meet current community needs, although some could be converted to meet lower division needs.
- *Future Need:* a total of 31 baseball/softball fields will be needed by the 2028 planning horizon population. This represents an additional two fields.
- *Comments:* Coordination of resources between the different user groups will be important to make the most of the existing facilities. Also, additional fields in new parks could replace scattered aging facilities. Any new fields should be planned to be clustered into groups to create a more efficient maintenance and use.

SOCCER FIELDS

Soccer fields can vary in dimension according to the intended age group. In order to support regulation play, a soccer field must be at least 50 yards x 80 yards for youth and 60-75 yards x 110-120 yards for adults. One regulation-sized field can be used for multiple fields

for youth. Portable goals may be used. Fields must be level without holes or mounds.

EXISTING FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow provides no formal soccer fields, but in combination with the school district, a total of 13 soccer fields are available for community use. The majority of these fields are located at the Jeremy Bullock soccer complex adjacent to Margaret Leary Elementary School. These fields allow for large-scale tournaments but lack sufficient irrigation to be properly maintained.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

The Butte Soccer Club indicated a serious concern about the irrigation at the Jeremy Bullock fields. The school district and the soccer club have requested assistance from the City-County in maintaining this facility. The club also indicated that the soccer complex is one of the best in the state, supporting a fast-growing sport.

Soccer fields are another type of facility that benefits from collection into one location. Because different age groups play on different size fields, large turf areas can support a wide variety of playable configurations. Soccer fields are also often developed to support other sports use such as ultimate Frisbee, rugby and lacrosse.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

The City of Helena has adopted a standard of one soccer field per 3,200 persons, again recognizing that Helena serves all of Lewis and Clark County. The City of Kalispell recently adopted a standard of one soccer field per 1,783 persons. The 13 soccer fields in Butte represent an existing level of service of one field per 2,662 persons. As with other facilities examined, Butte-Silver Bow's existing service falls between the two comparable communities, with slightly more fields by population than Helena and slightly fewer than Kalispell.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

The 13 fields in use for soccer in Butte-Silver Bow provide a total of 143 total game and practice time slots per week. Based on the information provided by the Butte Soccer Club and the YMCA youth soccer program, the current use of these fields generates a demand of 120 practices and games per week during the season. The excess supply of 23 time slots represents approximately two fields.

PROPOSED FACILITY GUIDELINES

Based on the analyses above, the current number of soccer fields is doing a good job of serving the community's needs. Excess soccer fields help support the state tournaments, along with overflow onto the football fields at Copper Mountain Youth Park, and are able to be used by other emerging or less organized sports when not in scheduled use.

- Proposed LOS Guideline: 1 field/2,600 population

FACILITY NEEDS

Using the facility guidelines noted above, the following needs for soccer fields have been calculated.

- *Current Need:* The recommended guideline for soccer fields is based on the current supply and no additional fields are required to meet community needs.
- *Future Need:* Based on population growth and growth in the sport, one additional field will be needed at the planning horizon of 2028.
- *Comments:* Maintenance of the existing fields is important to the soccer program in Butte-Silver Bow and a large portion of the fields is currently threatened by lack of adequate irrigation. One potential way to address the lack of adequate irrigation is to replace the existing fields with artificial field turf.

FOOTBALL FIELDS

Often, football and soccer fields can be used interchangeably. Football fields are generally 160 feet by 360 feet and must include goal posts.

EXISTING FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow provides four football fields at the Copper Mountain Youth Park. In addition, the school district has two facilities at East Middle School and West Elementary, and Butte Central maintains the MAC center with a stadium football field. Montana Tech also has three football fields at the Alumni Stadium Complex. The Butte High School Field and the fields at Montana Tech are assumed to only be available for occasional use around the schedules of their primary users. Additionally, the MAC center field is assumed to be mostly used by Butte Central users and available for only an occasional game. For this analysis the available fields are

assumed to be primarily the Copper Mountain Youth Park and East Middle School.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

In many communities football fields are developed with the intention to be multi-functional, allowing for use by other sports such as rugby, soccer, ultimate Frisbee and lacrosse.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

No standards for football fields are established in either Helena or Kalispell. In many communities this sport is accommodated entirely on school property and community users share the facilities needed for school use.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

The current use reported by the Youth Football League and the middle school football programs indicates that a typical football field can support more practice and game time slots than can other fields; two practices per day on weekdays raises the number of time slots to 18 for a typical field. After discounting the Butte High School, MAC Center and Montana Tech fields to four available time slots per week, the 10 fields provided in Silver Bow County supply a total of 110 game or practice time slots per week. Current use by middle school football and youth football generates a total demand for 88 time slots. The difference between the supply and demand, 22 time slots, represents a surplus of a little over one field.

PROPOSED FACILITY GUIDELINES

Adjusting the existing level of service to reflect the surplus field in the inventory results in the following guideline for football fields:

- Proposed LOS Guideline: 1 football field/4,000 population.

FACILITY NEEDS

Using the facility guidelines noted above, the following needs for baseball fields have been calculated.

- *Current Need:* The current need for football fields is nine fields or one less than the current inventory.
- *Future Need:* The future need for football fields at the 2028 projected population is nine fields.
- *Comments:* Any additional demand for football should be accommodated within existing facilities.

TRAILS AND PATHWAYS

Trails are linear corridors with hard- or soft-surfaced trails. As with greenways, trails often follow abandoned railroad rights-of-way, power lines, or waterways. Trails usually contain seating and may have associated trailheads, parking, and interpretive signage. Trails provide public access to active recreation such as walking, biking, or running, and alternative transportation options. These areas serve the entire City-County.

EXISTING FACILITIES

The Copperway Trails and Butte Heritage Park Trails are a network of non-vehicular trails linking a variety of cultural sites designed to celebrate the area's history. The trail system includes paved and unpaved sections that connect the Visitor Center to Father Sheehan Park and Montana Tech. Other existing segments of the regional trail system include a trail along the Butte Anaconda Pacific railroad corridor and the Silver Bow Creek Greenway Trails.

When completed, the Maud S Canyon Trail, located on private and U.S. Forest Service property, will connect the urban trail system to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Copper Mountain Youth Park, McGruff/Manning Park and Father Sheehan Park all include internal trails that provide an accessible path of travel around the parks as well as opportunities for fitness walking within the sites.

According to the City-County GIS data there is currently a total of 19.5 miles of developed trail in the planning area. These trails are depicted on Map 1 at the beginning of this report.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

In Butte-Silver Bow and across the county, trails have become one of the most used and most desired recreation facilities. In this area, various types of trails are used for activities such as walking, bicycling, skateboarding, ATV and motorcycle riding, mountain biking, hiking and more.

In the urban area of Butte, trails provide an enjoyable walking experience as well as a way to get to community destinations safely. These trails also provide connections from homes to the edge of the city, and into the national forest and other public lands that provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities.

Access to the edge of the city and into the natural areas beyond was also an important feature of trails to participants in the focus group about ATV and motorcycle riding. A unique challenge is the desire to accommodate youth engaging in these activities who are not able to legally drive their vehicles on public streets to get to legal ATV- or motorcycle-riding areas. The mix of users was also an important topic of public input. In some areas dedicated trails for non-motorized use are required, while in others the trails and pathways can be reasonably shared.

In many parts of the country trail development has focused on key opportunity corridors such as abandoned railroads and creek corridors. Other strategies have included creating pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly connections between major community destinations such as parks, schools and residential areas.

For recreational trails, communities have found that creating trail loops, sometimes using combinations of on- and off-street trails, increases the value of each mile of trail to the user. This type of trail development allows for increased enjoyment as the user is not required to turn around and backtrack to return to a starting point.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

Both Helena and Kalispell have adopted level of service standards for providing trails. If the higher Kalispell standard of 1.05 miles/1,000 persons is applied to Butte-Silver Bow's current population a total of 36 miles of trail (16.8 more than currently exists) would be needed. Similarly, if the 0.29 mile of trail/1,000 persons standard adopted by Helena were applied, 10.0 miles would be needed, which is approximately half of the current inventory. In both comparable communities the trail standard is considered a minimum, intended to maintain progress in developing the trail system along with growth.

GEOGRAPHIC/CONNECTIVITY ANALYSIS

Much of the current trail development in Butte-Silver Bow has been concentrated in the portion of Butte that is north of the interstate. These trail projects have focused on the longer corridors created by major streets, such as Farrell and Continental, and the former mine railroad rights-of-way.

Additional rail corridors present opportunities for long distance trail exercise and enjoyment of the natural character of the area. Some of the rail corridors could also be used to connect residents to important locations, such as Thompson Park, and other trail networks contained within large public land holdings.

Trails are important opportunities for the more remote communities in Silver Bow County because they will facilitate connections to recreation possibilities in nearby public lands.

Smaller connections can be important as well. In examining the access to park facilities as part of the park land analysis above, several potential connections from parks to neighborhoods could result in considerably better access for local residents. The first is a connection from the Copper Mountain Youth Park due east along the right-of-way for Clay Avenue. A trail connection here would put much of the neighborhood between South Montana Street and Hanson Road within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of this park. A second connection would be to open a route into Stodden Park from either the east or south side. This would require crossing the existing golf course, which may not be possible, but would open up a much more convenient access point for pedestrians from the surrounding areas.

Existing plans for expansion include linking the Chamber of Commerce facility to the greenway with a new trail that will cross Montana Street. Other trail needs include additional connections to the national forest to the east and additional trails to provide access to the mine/Superfund properties as they become part of the park system.

PROPOSED FACILITY GUIDELINES

Based on the community input, geographic analysis and the desired connections, Butte-Silver Bow needs a trail system that provides looping recreational trails as well as spur trails that connect to existing and future resources in nearby public lands. The trail network should be focused on Butte due to the large concentration of users there, but should also include trails in remote communities.

The actual number of miles of trail that will be required will depend on the priority connections determined by the community and the final alignments of the major trails and connections. The geographic analysis of Butte-Silver Bow indicates that at least 15 additional miles of additional trail will be necessary to connect gaps in the system and make several key connections between the community and surrounding resources. This 15 miles added to the existing inventory of trails, plus approximately 35 miles of already proposed trail, equals a total of 69.5 miles of trail in the regional system. This can be translated into a level of service guideline expressed in miles of trail per 1,000 people.

- Proposed level of service guideline: 1.87 miles/1,000 population

FACILITY NEEDS

Based on the proposed guideline above the following needs for trails have been calculated:

- *Current Need:* Approximately 45.2 miles of additional trail are currently needed to meet this standard, for a total of 64.7 miles.
- *Future Need:* 50 additional miles of trail are needed to reach the planning horizon total of 69.5 miles.
- *Comments:* None.

TENNIS COURTS

Tennis courts are generally constructed in pairs or groupings of four or more. Courts must have adequate fencing, net, and color-coated surfaces. No major cracks or surface regularities should exist. Tennis courts are usually located at larger parks, such as community parks, or at high and middle schools.

EXISTING FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow provides 11 tennis courts in existing parks. These existing courts are concentrated in community parks, with one additional court in Charley Judd Park. Twelve additional courts are provided by others, including the school district, Montana Tech and Fairmount Hot Springs; however, the four courts on Excelsior Street next to West Elementary School have degraded to being nearly unplayable. Currently all of the tennis courts available in Butte are outdoors.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

Butte-Silver Bow residents have been enthusiastic about tennis and response to summer clinics and camps has been positive. The Butte Tennis Association has taken on management of all of the tennis programming from high school varsity and adult clinics down to beginner camps in the summer.

The loss of the inflatable dome-covered indoor courts has limited tennis entirely to the summer and there is considerable interest in an indoor facility. However, the tennis association is not in a position to finance or operate such a facility alone.

The outdoor courts at Father Sheehan, Stodden Park and on Excelsior Street all are in various states of disrepair. Some are in need of resurfacing while others will need a more complete overhaul.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

The City of Helena has an adopted standard of one court/2,000 persons for tennis courts. This is fairly close to the existing level of

service for Butte-Silver Bow, when the eight courts that are unusable or not generally available to the public are removed. With 15 usable courts, the existing level of service for Butte-Silver Bow is one court/2,307.

FACILITY NEEDS

The two substantial needs for tennis in Butte-Silver Bow are the renovation of existing courts and the provision of some indoor tennis facilities to allow year-round play.

No level of service guideline is proposed for tennis courts at this time. Instead, as community parks are added to the park system, groups of tennis courts should be considered to supplement or replace courts as needed. Additionally, the community should consider the feasibility of enclosing either existing or new courts to provide for year-round play.

GOLF COURSES

EXISTING FACILITIES

There is one publicly-owned golf course, Highland View, and a driving range at Copper Mountain Youth Park. The Highland View course includes nine par 3, holes. Butte Country Club has an 18-hole golf course with limited public use. Fairmont Hot Springs, located 15 miles west of Butte, also has an 18-hole golf course.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

The Highland View Golf course has a committed membership, many of whom play the course several times a week. The input about golf from the community highlighted the low cost of the nine-hole course and the high quality of maintenance.

Participants in the golf focus group felt that there is probably interest in an additional 18-hole course but were unsure how much people would be willing to pay to play it. The bigger need seemed to be improving the supporting facilities at Stodden Park such as the clubhouse. A larger pro shop and social areas, as well updated locker rooms and amenities, would add a lot to the facility.

FACILITY NEEDS

There is clearly enough need in the community for golf to support the existing facilities. However, with the private facilities in the area and the desire to retain the low cost of play for public golf, an additional course does not appear to be a need.

INDOOR FACILITIES

Indoor facilities may include community centers, gymnasiums or other indoor spaces that provide diverse programmable space.

- **Gymnasiums:** Gymnasium dimensions vary according to intended use, but in order to accommodate regulation basketball, gyms should be 84 feet in length by 50 feet in width. The playing surface should consist of resilient flooring materials. Gymnasiums may be located in free-standing facilities, but more often are located within community centers.
- **Weight room/fitness center:** Weight rooms vary in size and include fitness equipment including free weights and weight machines. They may also have cardio equipment such as stationary bicycles, elliptical machines, stair climbers, and treadmills. A room may also be provided for group exercise.
- **Other indoor spaces** can include a wide range of facilities from classrooms to large indoor fields, as well as multi-purpose recreation centers that can include any combination of spaces.

EXISTING FACILITIES

The City-County does not currently provide any indoor spaces as part of the park system. However, the Butte Civic Center does serve a variety of recreation needs in a large, flexible indoor space. In addition to the multi-use stadium space, a secondary gymnasium, weight room and indoor walking path, and multi-purpose meeting/classroom are provided at the civic center. The various schools in the area are the single biggest provider of gym space. All together, the public schools offer 12 gymnasiums. The Knights of Columbus and Montana Tech each offer a gymnasium.

There are six weight room facilities in Butte, including the recently opened Butte Family YMCA. The City-County does not own a weight room, but several are located at public schools, and there is one at Montana Tech. Two private fitness centers, 24 Hour Fitness and ST Fitness, also serve the area.

The YMCA Family Fitness Center is a full featured community center with gymnasium and other activity spaces combined for efficiency.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

The public participants in the planning process have emphasized the general importance of indoor facilities to recreation in Butte-Silver

Bow due to the long and cold winters. The existing indoor facilities are highly valued and new additions such as the YMCA aquatics and fitness center are well used.

As mentioned earlier in this report, an additional indoor need that was raised during the initial public involvement process was the replacement of indoor tennis courts. When these indoor courts were available, tournaments and regular play were possible through the winter.

The trend in public indoor facilities is to collect all of the needs into one centralized indoor recreation center. This approach helps to minimize the staff required to monitor the building and brings multiple constituencies together in support of what is typically a major capital campaign.

FACILITY NEEDS

The need for community center space is largely filled by the YMCA facilities and the Butte Civic Center. Traditional gym space is apparently adequate for basketball, volleyball and other sports that can be accommodated in these spaces. Because the schools are the provider of this space, an important need for indoor recreation is the coordination of public access and the resources to help support the upkeep of these facilities.

Based on the use of the indoor tennis courts that are no longer available, an indoor tennis center is needed but will likely require additional partnerships to pursue.

OTHER FACILITIES

In addition to those noted previously, several other types of facilities are needed in Butte-Silver Bow to increase the variety of recreation opportunities available to City-County residents. The provision of these facilities is based on design guidelines for parks, based on the functions the particular park is intended to serve in the system, rather than on numerical guidelines. For this reason, no numerical guidelines are proposed for the following facilities.

PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds come in all shapes and sizes, and may contain multiple design components. Playgrounds can also be designed to incorporate thematic areas with interpretive and educational elements.

Playgrounds can be constructed using a variety of materials, but must include impact-attenuating surfacing and a sufficient barrier to separate preschool and school age areas and keep children safe from traffic and conflicting uses.

Play equipment is an important part of providing basic park services. At the most basic level a mini park can be functional with only a playground, small open area for unstructured play and some basic site amenities. However, many of the smallest parks in the Butte-Silver Bow system either have sub-standard play equipment or have had the structures removed entirely.

OTHER PARK AMENITIES/FURNISHINGS

Much of Butte-Silver Bow's park land is under- or undeveloped. Over time, as facilities and amenities have reached the end of their lives, they have been removed rather than replaced. This results in a need for extensive addition of basic park amenities, such as benches, tables, water fountains and trash cans.

ICE SKATING FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow currently maintains six outdoor neighborhood ice rinks, supplemented by six additional outdoor rinks provided by others and the Butte Community Ice Center. Most of these facilities are located in the northern part of Butte. These facilities are providing a valuable outdoor recreation option for the winter season and their activities should be continued. To avoid vandalism and other problems associated with being isolated, ice rink only facilities should not be duplicated. Additional facilities should be considered as facilities in parks added to urban areas that do not have neighborhood-level access to ice facilities.

DOG PARK

Dog parks can be either free-standing facilities or dedicated portions of larger parks. In either case, these areas are designed as off-leash areas for dogs and their owners. Dog parks should include shade structures or trees, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, and seating areas and may include special features, such as bag holders.

While many Butte-Silver Bow residents have large yards where dogs can be exercised off-leash, the opportunity for both dogs and their owners to socialize in a contained environment has been requested in Butte. A sanctioned area for dogs to be in parks and off-leash creates an alternative to breaking the posted "no dogs" rule in Butte-Silver Bow parks and allowing dogs to illegally run free in the City-County. Considering the large geographic area of the Butte-Silver Bow planning area, at least two dog parks or off-leash areas are needed to serve residents. These could be contained in existing parks, added as features to new parks or established as special use sites on their own.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow residents engage in a variety of outdoor recreation activities. During the initial public input process, several facilities were identified that would support some of these activities. Fishing ponds are an excellent way to bring access to fishing to the urban area and has been a desire in the community for some time. A ropes course is a set obstacle course used for physical training as well as team-building exercises. Another active group that could use more formalized facilities is hang gliders and paragliders. Launching from high in the mountains, hang gliders use the steep slopes east of Butte and need a flat landing area with an unobstructed approach. As the urban area fills in, landing sites for these activities become more limited and a clear open field in an appropriate location near the mountains would provide for this group and could also be used for other activities. Each of these facilities should be considered as community needs, subject to the priorities and resources to be discussed later in the planning process.

COMMUNITY HERITAGE FACILITIES

Butte-Silver Bow has taken major steps toward preserving and celebrating the unique heritage of the community. The historic uptown area, the Granite Mountain Memorial Overlook, preserved buildings and facilities such as the World Museum of Mining all help to tell the story of Butte and surrounding communities. The park system has the potential to play a major role in telling this story, especially as more and more of the mine lands (where much of this history took place) become parks. Butte has the potential to be as much of a leader in the telling of the social, environmental and industrial story of mining as it was a producer of copper. The largest need in this area is to add interpretive elements, such as signs, markers and art, to important locations in the community that help to recount and interpret Butte-Silver Bow's past. In addition to the mine sites themselves, with their iconic headframes and stories of mining the wealth of the mountain and the social struggles that were associated with it, many of the remediated sites speak to the impact of mining activities on water quality, deforestation and wildlife. The form of this interpretation should be varied and include information and methods of communication that are relevant to a wide variety of age groups and backgrounds.

Other heritage facilities include important community gathering places. The most prominent of these would likely be the Columbia Gardens. Remnant structures from this site have already become a part of Clark Park and the carousel that once was a major part of the amusements is in the process of being restored. To the extent possible, Butte-Silver Bow should use these heritage facilities to attract people to, and tell the story of, this fascinating community.

AQUATIC FACILITY NEEDS

The opportunity to get wet, cool down, learn to swim, compete, or just get a low impact workout are all important benefits of aquatic facilities. This analysis separates aquatic facilities from other park and recreation facilities due to their special significance to the community, as well as the additional resources (both staff and financial) that are required to build and maintain them.

DEFINITIONS

Aquatic facilities typically include pools and other opportunities for water play, such as spray features, water parks and wading pools. These facilities vary in size and depth according to intended age group and use. They may be located both indoors and outdoors, and may be recreational or competition-oriented in nature. Recreational pools often include water features designed for use by different age groups, such as slides or spray elements.

EXISTING AQUATIC FACILITIES

The only public aquatic facility in Butte-Silver Bow is a wading pool in Chester Steele Park. However, there are five pools in the surrounding area. There is a six-lane 25-meter pool at Montana Tech, an indoor recreational pool at the Butte County Club, and two hot spring pools at Fairmont Hot Springs, 15 miles west of Butte. The new facility at Butte Family YMCA includes an eight-lane lap pool, and a zero-depth entry family pool with two water slides. In addition to these pools, a small wading pool and splash feature are included in Chester Steele Park. A retractable wall and deck area was considered during the design of this facility but limitations on capital funding forced the removal of these features.

The publicly-owned pool at Stodden Park was permanently closed in 2006, because the age and condition of the pool had passed the point where repairs were cost-effective. Residents of Butte-Silver Bow voted to contribute the funding used to operate the Stodden Park Pool, staffed under contract by the YMCA, to the new indoor YMCA facility. As part of this agreement, the pool at the YMCA is open to the public with no membership required.

For analysis purposes it is useful to define the amount of publicly accessible pool facilities. The typical measure of pools is the total square footage of water surface area provided. For the purposes of this analysis this surface area is discounted according to the level of public access, recognizing that some facilities serve the general public

to a greater or lesser degree based on cost and access barriers. The table below summarizes pool space in Silver Bow County and the amount applied to the inventory after discounting for limited access or high cost.

| FACILITY | APPROXIMATE SQUARE FOOTAGE | SQUARE FOOTAGE APPLIED |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| YMCA | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| Montana Tech | 3,300 | 1,650 |
| Fairmont Hot Springs | 16,000 | 3,200 |
| Country Club | N/A | N/A |
| Hotel Pools | N/A | N/A |
| Total | 29,300 | 14,850 |

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FINDINGS/TRENDS

A variety of aquatics needs have been identified in the public involvement process. The major interests fell into several categories:

- Outdoor aquatic opportunities;
- Adjacent space for socializing and enjoying summer weather;
- Competition pool; and
- Variety of aquatic activities.

While many of these desires can be traced to the activities once enjoyed at the Stodden Park pool, there is also an interest in additional variety of opportunities in addition to the basic swimming pool. Other community input highlighted the limited summer season for outdoor aquatics in Butte-Silver Bow.

Several aquatics interest groups have aligned around a proposal named “Splash Butte.” A group of volunteers has developed a preliminary design and organized fundraising around an approximately four-acre facility that includes an outdoor eight-lane 50-meter competition pool and an outdoor water park with many features ranging from slides to a wave pool.

Aquatics facilities are the most desired facility in communities across the country. The benefits of aquatic programming, recreational and competitive swimming, and simply getting wet on a hot summer day are broadly appealing. However, while aquatic facilities are extremely popular, they are also among the most resource-intensive facilities included in park systems. Aquatic facilities with standing water

typically require not only water, equipment and heat, but lifeguards and support staff to provide safety and management of the facility.

Most park systems that include aquatics facilities are limited to outdoor only facilities and often desire to find a way to provide swimming and water play year-round. However, outdoor swimming remains popular, particularly in communities with long, hot summers. In some communities the indoor and outdoor experiences are blended with combination facilities or with retractable roof or wall systems.

An additional trend in aquatics is the move from swimming in flat, or deep water, to shallow water with spray features, slides, current channels and other moving water. Facilities that include these water features are called leisure pools. A leisure pool stresses the recreational swimming element and has a majority of its pool area with depths of four feet or less. The shallow water also permits more people in the pool at one time and is more conducive to play and general recreation swimming, rather than lap or competitive swimming. Surveys completed by MIG and partner organizations have shown that leisure pools draw 2-3 times the number of annual swimmers compared to conventional flat water pools.

Communities are also building water parks, large scale water amusement areas with a relatively costly entry fee. These are usually open air and operated during the summer. In order to attract the number of visitors to make this type of facility viable they are typically located in highly visible locations along high traffic corridors.

Interactive water features are another national trend. These features attract high use, especially from children and families. They can be integrated into a wide variety of park settings, including urban plazas. Once built, interactive water features are relatively inexpensive to operate (compared to a swimming pool) because they typically do not require life guards since there is no standing water. Unlike pools and water parks, entrance fees are typically not charged for interactive water features because there is no access controlled gate.

MARKET AREA

Any type of recreation facility has a natural market area determined by the distance users are willing to travel to use the facility. Large aquatics facilities typically draw from a relatively large geographic area and require a considerable population to provide the number of users necessary to support the portion of operating costs covered by user fees. The relatively small population of the Butte-Silver Bow market

area would require a very high participation rate by local swimmers and a large number of visitors from outside of the primary market area.

The amount of time that users are willing to travel to a major aquatic facility is typically between 30 minutes and one hour. In Butte-Silver Bow this time translates to about five to 40 miles, with the frequency of use dropping off as distance increases. The distance between major population centers around Butte constrains the market area to approximately the County boundary. Further, with approximately 80% of the population of Silver Bow County living in the Butte area, the population of Butte makes up the majority of the potential users.

LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON

Based on the available facilities and demand in the respective communities, Kalispell and Helena have each established level of service standards for pool facilities. These standards are based on a number of square feet of pool area per 1,000 population. The adopted service levels for each community are listed on the next page.

| ADOPTED SERVICE STANDARD | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| CITY | |
| Helena | 196.6 sq.ft/1,000 |
| Kalispell | 85 sq.ft/1,000 |

The standard for pool space in Helena is based on the population of Lewis and Clark County recognizing that, like Butte, Helena facilities serve the entire area. Applying these standards to Butte-Silver Bow's current population results in a range of approximately 3,000 to 6,800 square feet of needed pool space. This equates to one six-lane 25-yard pool up to slightly more than an eight-lane 25-meter pool. (In comparison, a 50-meter competition pool has 13,455 square feet of pool surface area.)

FACILITY NEEDS

It is important to note that standards do not tell the whole story of a community's needs. While existing facilities may meet the basic needs for aquatic programming, other needs and desires still exist. How this community chooses to define and meet the needs for aquatics will largely be a function of the willingness to build and maintain facilities. This raises two important questions to be

answered by the community before moving forward with new aquatic facilities:

How much capital (design, construction) funding can the community generate for aquatics facilities?

What level of ongoing pool subsidy can the City-County support for operations of aquatics facilities?

These questions will need to be answered in the context of the other community needs identified in the above sections.

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS NEEDS

The needs identified in this report represent a large step forward in the type and quantity of park and recreation amenities available to Butte-Silver Bow residents. It is likely that not all needs outlined in this analysis will be met during the planning horizon. However, as the community needs are prioritized and implemented, the types of parks and recreation facilities owned and operated by the City-County will require specialized, concentrated efforts to develop, manage and maintain. This will, in turn, require additional resources including both staff and maintenance funding. An additional need will be to add the necessary expertise and management appropriate to the quality and quantity of services that Butte-Silver Bow will provide.

The next steps in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan will establish priorities and the decision-making process to determine where effort should be directed to move toward meeting community needs and creating the ideal park system for Butte-Silver Bow.

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